

Acknowledge Committee

Introduction. I'm KATY KONE, representing Rebish & Konen Livestock from Dillon.

We are here to support House Bill #541. We believe that domestic livestock trailing is an agricultural use and therefore should be exempt from the commercial use status by Montana Department of FWP.

As the MDFWP purchases more land in Montana for wildlife habitat it is important that traditional uses, such as grazing and trailing, be kept in place. We border the Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area and the Blacktail WMA with our private land. Our family has been trailing through Robb-Ledford for 50 plus years to get to our forest permits on the Gravelly Range. We trail through for two days in the summer with two bands of sheep and two days in the fall on our way home. Trailing through does not have a negative impact on the established trailway. FWP personnel have stated they have no problem with livestock trailing through Wildlife Management Areas.

If we do not get HB 541 passed, the future of our ranching activities and those of many other ranching families in Montana will be jeopardized by environmental groups and their many lawsuits to stop us from trailing through Wildlife Management Areas. Deeming domestic livestock trailing as "commercial use" would have an immediate, detrimental impact on Montana's ranching families.

This is a necessary bill and will give ranchers the ability to continue to sustain the valuable economy and land bases associated with the agriculture industry in Montana. If it is truly the intent of the legislature to protect agriculture activities from government zoning and nuisance ordinances, then this bill must be passed. We appreciate your support of agriculture in Montana and our right to sustain our business and the Montana economy.